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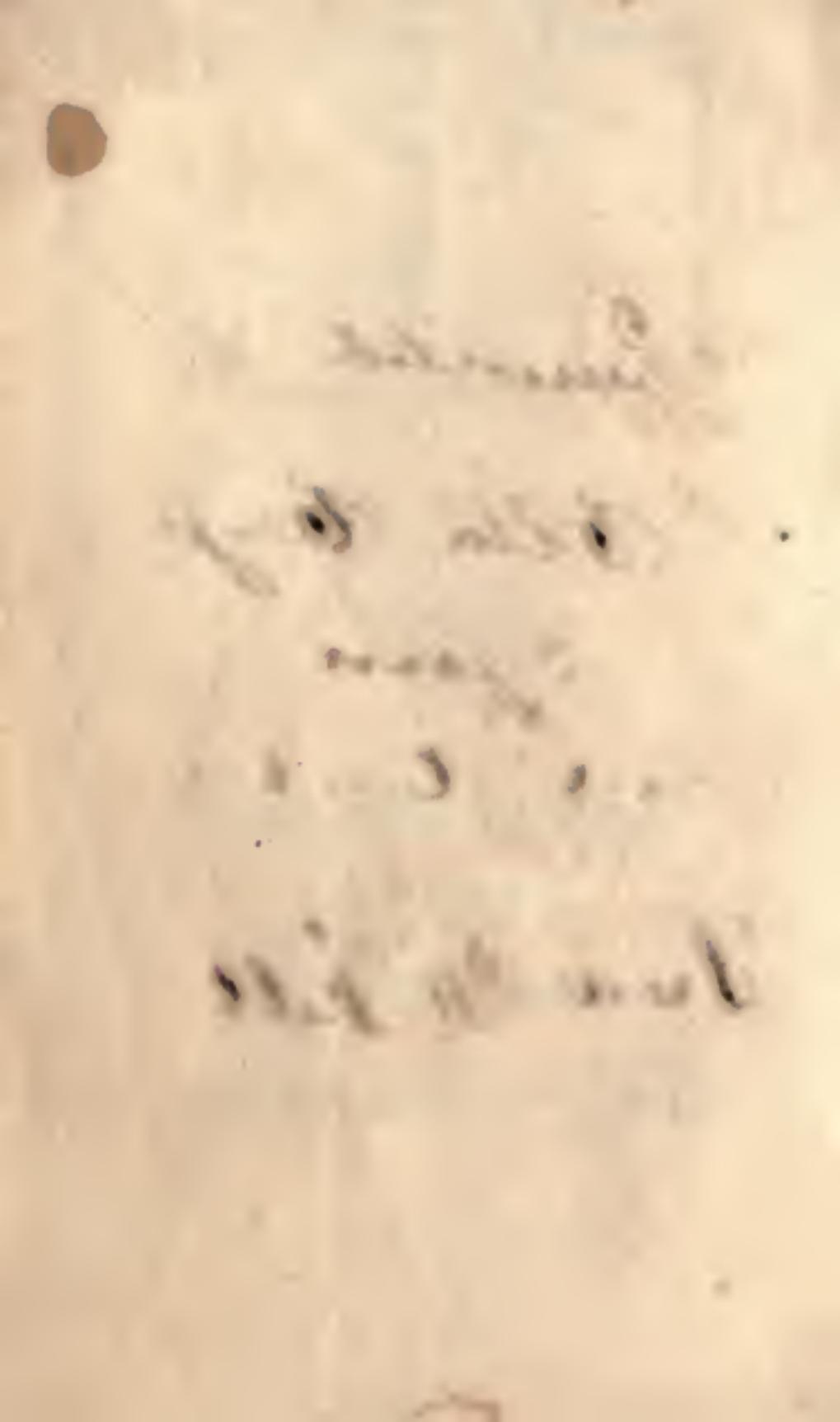
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15

Presented to
Ella Cross
years
her teacher

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See page 11.

THE
PENITENT BOY:

OR,

SIN BRINGS SORROW.

REVISED BY D. P. KIDDER.

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THE PENITENT BOY.

“Do lend me your new knife, which mamma gave you,” asked Samuel; “I want to cut notches in my stick, and play Robinson Crusoe: do, will you, Alfred?”

“No, I cannot Sam; so do not ask any more. I wish you would not tease me for my knife; you cannot

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have it; I do not want it hurt."

"Well, but you lent it to cousin James, on Monday, and he did not spoil it, did he?"

"Now do be quiet, Samuel; I cannot lend it to you, so that is all I shall say."

"Why I never saw you so cross, Alfred."

"Yes, I am cross, I know. I feel very cross and uncomfortable, so do not ask any more about the knife."

Just then an aunt of the

little boys entered the room, and Samuel turned to her in his trouble. ¶

“Now do not you think, aunt, Alfred ought to lend me his knife, just for a minute, to cut a Robinson Crusoe stick?”

“No doubt he will,” replied Miss Woodford; “I never knew Alfred cross or unkind: he does not mean that he will not lend it; he is only joking, I am sure.”

“Yes, aunt, I do mean it; I have made up my mind

that nobody shall use my knife."

"Well, then," urged the anxious Samuel, "do you cut my stick yourself; I only want seven notches in it, to make believe the days of the week: of course, you will not refuse this, will you?"

"Where is your knife, my boy?" asked his aunt; "is it in your pocket?"

"No, aunt."

"Well, get it then, my dear, and do this little kindness for your brother, who

looks so imploringly there, with his stick in his hand."

Alfred left the room, looking very thoughtful; and Samuel took a seat on a stool, keeping his eye on the door, resolved to wait quietly for Alfred's return, as he was not an impatient boy. After a considerable time, Alfred came back, with a face very much flushed, and no knife could be seen.

"Have you got it, Alfred?" asked Samuel, jumping up; "come, do cut my notches,

because I cannot get on the island and begin to play until it is done."

"I cannot do it, Samuel; I have not got my knife."

"Where is your pretty new knife, then, my dear? I saw you put it carefully away in a box one day."

"Yes, I did, aunt; but I have just dropped it into a crack in the hall, and it is gone out of sight."

"O dear! let us try to get it," said the kind aunt; and away they all three ran to

the crack in the passage.
“Show me exactly the place where it went in, Alfred.”

“Just here, aunt,” said he, pointing to a very small crevice between the boards.

“O no; this cannot be the spot, the crack is too small to admit a knife: it must be somewhere else. But I see no crack in any other part. My dear boy,” continued Miss Woodford, looking into Alfred’s face, “you did not let it down here.”

Her gentle words, accom-

panied as they were with a sorrowful look, melted him at once, for Alfred was not a hardened boy, and he ran off to his room, weeping all the way.

"Well," said Samuel, as he returned to the parlor, "I suppose I must mark some make-believe notches on my stick with my pencil."

Miss Woodford left him to his play, and went in search of her sister, the mother of the boys. Taking a seat by her side in the dining-room,

she asked Mrs. Sinclair if she knew anything of the knife she had given to Alfred.

"No," replied Mrs. Sinclair; "I have not seen it for some time: but I think I heard James admiring it, on Monday."

"I am afraid it is lost, sister," continued Miss Woodford: "but this is not the worst part of it; I greatly fear Alfred has told an untruth about the affair."

"I hope not," replied Mrs. Sinclair, with a troubled

countenance; “I never knew either of my boys to be guilty of anything so shocking. Where is he?”

Miss Woodford then related the whole of the circumstances, adding, “I believe Alfred has gone to his room.”

Mrs. Sinclair considered, for a moment, what course to pursue, and then resolved to allow her little son to remain in the retirement he had chosen, at least for some time.

Samuel could not enjoy his game alone, for he saw very plainly that his brother had been guilty of a great sin ; so he went into the garden, and walked up and down, feeling very melancholy. He knew that God had said that liars have their portion with those who are shut up in eternal darkness ; and he felt very sorry that he had asked for the loan of the knife.

After an hour or two, Mrs. Sinclair went up to converse

with the guilty boy; but as she was drawing near his room she heard the sound of his voice, as if conversing with some one, and, supposing that Samuel had joined him, she stopped for a moment to ascertain from whence the voice came, when she distinctly heard Alfred saying, “Forgive my sin, heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ’s sake.” This was a confirmation to her of the sad fact that he was really guilty of the crime laid to

his charge ; at the same time it was a comfort to her to hear that he was penitent. She stepped gently back into the parlor, thankful, amid her sorrow, to find that her little boy was confessing his sin to the holy God. She could not, however, remain long absent from her erring child, but again ascending the stairs, and finding all silent, she entered the room.

Alfred was sitting, bathed in tears, with two books by his side, a Bible and a prayer-

boo'k. "O, mamma!" he exclaimed, "I am ashamed to see you—I am—I am; but I will tell you all about it. O, I am so unhappy! I am afraid you will not forgive me, and I feel sure the Saviour will not."

When he saw the tears falling over his mother's cheeks, he felt more distressed than ever, and covering his face with his hands, he wept bitterly. At length he went on to confess the whole matter. "You know, mam-

ma, my cousin James liked my knife, and asked me to give it to him for some sweetmeats he had in his pocket; so I consented to part with the knife you gave me, without thinking. I wish I had asked you about it. I have been very wicked. I told a lie to try to hide it. What shall I do?"

"Are you really sorry for your sin, Alfred? this is the question; or are you only mortified that your guilt is discovered?"

"O yes, mamma, I am indeed sorry, and I have been trying to tell God about it. I asked him to forgive me, but I am afraid he will not. How dreadful it is to think that God will remember that I have told a lie! What would become of me, if I were to die to-night?"

Mrs. Sinclair took a chair by the side of her son, and told him if he really felt sorry, there was hope he might be forgiven; "for although," said she, "God is a God of

truth, and has said that who-soever loveth or maketh a lie shall be shut out of heaven, yet he has also said, if we repent of our sins, resolv-ing to forsake them, and come to him in the name of the Saviour, that he will pardon us for his sake."

"O, I hope he will forgive me! Do pray for me, mamma. What a dreadful thing it would be if I should be driven away from heaven at last, and go with liars away from God!" Then bursting

into tears, Alfred hid his face on his mother's neck, and they wept together.

Mrs. Sinclair then prayed with her penitent boy, and he became more calm. "Now, my son," she said, "we will go down to the parlor."

"O no, mamma; do let me go to bed: I would rather go to bed, if you will only kiss me, and forgive me. I should like to go to bed."

Mrs. Sinclair consented to Alfred's proposal, and after

reading a chapter in the Bible, and praying to be forgiven all his sins, for the sake of Jesus Christ, he retired to rest; but he passed a very uncomfortable night, and awoke in the morning with a very sorrowful heart.

Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair had resolved that nothing should be said to their son, the next morning, on the subject of the evening's transgression, as they believed that he felt truly sorry that he had offended God.

When the bell rung for family worship, Alfred appeared, with Samuel by his side; but he looked pale and unhappy, and his eyes were downcast as he took his usual seat by his father. The family sung some verses from that beautiful hymn beginning,—

“ There is a fountain fill’d with blood
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.”

Alfred was in the habit of pitching the tunes on those

occasions, but this morning Samuel took his place, and began the moment the verse was given out. When they came to the third line Alfred's tears flowed so fast he was obliged to stop; and if you had been sitting near his mamma you might have seen her cheek wet to, for she felt deeply for her little son.

After breakfast, the two boys went to their studies as usual, and Samuel was very kind and attentive to his brother, watching him in all

his movements, and trying, by all the means within his power, to win a smile from him, for his affectionate heart longed to see his brother as happy as usual. But all his efforts were unavailing; no one could see a gleam of cheerfulness on Alfred's countenance all the day.

Just before dinner, as he was standing by the parlor fire, with his back to the door, Rose, a kind Irish servant, came in to prepare the table.

"O, then, is it you it is, Master Alfred? I wanted to have a word with ye. What's the matter? sure your cheek's pale; it's sick entirely ye'll be soon," said the kind-hearted girl, "if you vex any more about that bit of a knife; and it's a good half hour I spent too, looking for it: but never mind, I am sure the mistress, good creature, will soon give ye another, or may be you will soon find the same."

Alfred looked at Rose very

thoughtfully, and asked, "Do you not know what I have done, Rose?"

"Sure and I never knew ye do anything bad since the day I came with ye from Belfast; think of that now, and ye 'll do bravely yet, my darlint."

"Ah, Rose! I see very plainly how it is; you do not know what I am. Did you ever read the fifth chapter of the Acts, and the twenty-first chapter of the Revelation, Rose?"

“Why yes, Master Alfred, to be sure, I’ve read the Bible through entirely, but I don’t just remember those particular parts by chapter and verse. But what has that to do with the loss, Master Alfred? I want to say a word of comfort to you. Think of Miss Mary when she lost her handkerchief; the mistress never said a word about it after: and it’s the flower of the country she is for kindness, when we tell her our faults.”

“Yes, yes, Rose, I know all that very well; but do you remember hearing about Ananias and Sapphira in the Bible?”

“O, if it’s I don’t remember that! I’ll forget kith and kin afore I’ll forget how afraid I was to tell a lie in the Sunday school, for fear of being struck dead; and it’s a fine scrape entirely I got into, and lost a pretty new frock into the bargain.”

“Did you, Rose, indeed? O, I wish I had been you!”

and the tears fell fast again over the penitent boy's cheeks.

"Ah now, Master Alfred, do not take on so. What can be the matter? Sure this story has nothing to do with you, has it?"

"I see how it is, Rose; the dreadful tale has been kept a secret. You do not know what I am."

"Is it I do not know what you are, Master Alfred? why sure it's your reason entirely ye'll lose by the heart-trou-

ble, whatever it is. Not know what ye are? Sure your're a fine young gentleman, and it's the son of the mistress ye're for kindness; and the likes o' ye I never saw, barrin' your brother, the darlint."

"O, do not talk to me so, Rose; it only makes me more ashamed! I am an ungrateful and a sinful boy, and I am afraid I shall never go to heaven."

"And is it you that is afraid of that? O dear! what

then is come to ye, my dear?"

Alfred was out of hearing before Rose had finished her kind speech. He could bear his sorrow no longer without talking to his mother.

Mrs. Sinclair was coming out of a little back parlor, with Samuel, as Alfred crossed the hall; and, taking his mother's hand, he said, "I want to talk to you, mamma."

Mrs. Sinclair led him to her room, and closing the door, she drew a chair for

him by her side, still holding his hand in hers.

Alfred was weeping too much to utter a syllable for some minutes; but when a little recovered, he exclaimed, “O, my dear mamma, I am so miserable, I cannot bear to think nor stay by myself. I was afraid to go to sleep last night, for I thought perhaps I should awake in that dreadful place where liars go; I never was so unhappy before in all my life.”

"I can easily imagine this, my dear boy," replied Mrs. Sinclair; "you were never guilty of the same sin before, I believe."

"You only *believe*, mamma: are you not sure I never told a lie before?"

"I hope you never did, my boy."

"Ah! I see it is as you told us one day, a liar can neither convince nor persuade others, and is not believed even when he tells the truth. Indeed, mamma,

I never did tell a lie before; but I was afraid you would think me an ungrateful boy for not taking more care of the present you gave me. O, I wish I had told the truth, and been more afraid of offending God than even you."

"I wish so too, my son. I have avoided saying much to you on the subject, because I hope and believe that you are truly sorry, and that you have confessed your sin to the great and glorious

Being who calls himself the God of truth; and you remember after the apostle John had been describing the beautiful city, where holy and redeemed people shall live when earth is passed away, he says that no one shall enter there who maketh a lie. Indeed, a liar could not live in heaven, if he were permitted to enter, for everything there is pure and holy."

"Yes, mamma; I have been reading the twenty-

first chapter of the Revelation, this morning."

" Well, my son, then in the fifteenth Psalm, when the question is asked, Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? the answer is, He that speaketh the truth in his heart. Then again, we are told by the wise man that lying lips are an abomination to the Lord. The holy God, who requireth truth in the inward parts, must look upon a child polluted with falsehood with just indignation, and as be-

longing to that fallen spirit who is called the father of lies, and who dwells where truth is unknown, and where all liars have their part. There truth is never spoken, except to deceive, and there repentance and prayer are of no avail."

"O yes, mamma," said the sorrowful Alfred, "I remember the hymn you taught me when I was a very little boy—

'The Lord delights in them that speak
The words of truth; but every liar

Must have his portion in the lake
That burns with brimstone and with fire.'

I never thought I should tell
a lie when I used to say that
hymn to you. O, I wish I
could be a little good boy
again!" said Alfred, wiping
away the tears.

"I trust you will yet be a
good and holy boy, my son;
and the suffering you have
caused yourself and your
family will prove a warning
to you: but you must not
trust to your own deceitful
heart, but look to God for

assistance to make you sincere and truthful. You find your conscience does not like a lie, but that it solemnly and dreadfully reproaches the liar; and you find too, my son, that to be holy is the only way to be happy."

"Yes, mamma, I do; but do you think the Saviour will forgive me, and make me happy again?"

"Yes, I have no doubt he will pardon your sin, if you are really sorry, and resolve to be watchful in future."

“Yes, mamma, I am indeed sorry, and very sorry, that I should offend God, and make you unhappy, and make myself in danger of having my portion in the lake that burns with brimstone and with fire.”

“Well then the Bible says, if you repent and forsake your sin, God will have mercy, and pardon your guilt. He will so forget it, that it will never appear against you at the last great day. You know I have

often told you that the blood of Jesus Christ can wash away all sin, and *all* must of course include yours. You can read this for yourself in the First Epistle of John, the first chapter, and the seventh verse."

Just then the dinner-bell rung, and Mrs. Sinclair and Alfred went down to dinner. As they were entering the parlor, they met Rose, who had been greatly concerned about her favorite; and she whispered in his ear, "Come

down to me, darlint, after the dinner: I want to say a word to ye."

Everybody tried to be cheerful at dinner; but Alfred could not forget his "heart-trouble," as Rose called it, nor had he much inclination for food.

When the repast was over, and Rose had cleared the room, he went down to hear what she had to say to him. The kind-hearted girl slipped a small parcel into his hand, wrapped in silver paper, say-

ing, “There, then, darlint; now sure ye ’ll dry your poor red eyes up entirely, and think no more about it and the loss.”

On opening the parcel, Alfred looked upon a pretty knife, very like the one his mamma had given him, and putting it on the table, he ran up to Rose, saying, “I cannot allow you to think me so much better than I am, Rose. I have been guilty of the same sin as Ananias and Sapphira; and

it is a wonder the great God has not driven me away from earth too."

Poor Rose was so greatly surprised that she looked at him some time in silence, while he continued,—

"Rose, you thought me a good boy, but I am very wicked. I gave away my knife, and then told a lie to try to hide it; but I hope I shall be forgiven, and mamma says the blood of Christ can wash all my guilt away."

"Sure then, dear, the mis-

tress is right entirely; and I hope you will be happy, as you used to be. Your poor eyes have done nothing but blink since the time the aunt searched in the hall for the knife; and it was sighing I heard ye when sleep gave them a little rest, that sure I didn't close mine very comfortably. So I just got the boy to run for his life, and get ye a pretty white knife at the shop, for it's a strong pet ye are of all of us entirely."

“This is very kind of you, Rose: and may I do what I like with the knife, Rose?”

“Sure you may, and it’s yours entirely; only don’t vex any more: let us see ye as merry as the kitten, as the likes o’ ye ought to be.”

The next morning Alfred and Samuel walked to their cousin’s; and as soon as James saw them, he ran up, presenting the unfortunate knife to Alfred, saying, “Ma does not wish me to keep it; so take it back.”

Alfred then told his aunt the whole of the affair, as quietly as his feelings would allow; and then desired that James might be allowed to have the knife Rose had given him, in exchange. As all the sweetmeats were eaten, it would not be fair to have back the knife without some return.

Alfred soon ran home with his own knife, and placed it in its own box, intending to keep it as a warning to him in future.

It is believed that Alfred was really and truly sorry for his sin; and he grew up a truthful and pious boy, dreading the very appearance of anything approaching to a lie.

Dear children, see that you always speak the truth. Remember anything you say INTENDING TO DECEIVE is a lie in the sight of God; and remember too that for all such words you will be called to give an account in the day of judgment.

He who made the eye can see, and he who made the ear can hear. Yes! and he will remember all you say and do; and if you should be suddenly called away, without repenting of your sin, and without being washed in the blood of the Saviour, by believing in him, you must have your portion where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Now the dear Redeemer is ready to receive you, but to-morrow it may be too

late: to-morrow may never come to you; for death may take you away this night.

THE END.





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